

JOHN BROWN

ORIGIN: Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire

MIGRATION: 1632 on Lyon [[Hotten 150](#)]

FIRST RESIDENCE: Watertown

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: Membership in Watertown church prior to 3 September 1634 implied by freemanship.

FREEMAN: 3 September 1634 (seventh in a sequence of eleven Watertown men) [[MBCR 1:369](#)].

ESTATE: The Watertown Inventory of Grants, compiled in 1644, lists for John Brown five lots: thirteen acre homestall; six acres upland; thirty acre Great Dividend; three acres Remote Meadow; and two acres upland adjoining the homestall "granted to his children Hannah & Mary Browne" [[WaBOP 77](#), also 3, 9].

There are a number of unusual features of this list. The first two lots would have been granted to him during his life, but the Great Dividend was allotted on 25 July 1636, a month after John Brown died. There is then a grant of Beaverbrook Plowlands to Brown, but there is a grant of three acres of Remote Meadow in his name, and then a two-acre addition to his homestall specifically granted to his children; perhaps the Remote Meadows grant was also a special posthumous grant, since the three acres would correspond to the household of widow Dorothy and her two daughters.

Two of the five lots, the six acres of upland and the Great Dividend lot, were bought by Abraham Brown [[WaBOP 21](#)].

Six acres of the homestall, and the Remote Meadows lot, ended up in the hands of **William Potter** [[WaBOP 125](#)]. This portion of the homestall must have had attached to it the proprietary rights of John Brown, for Potter was then granted a six-acre lot in Lieu of Township and a fifty-four acre farm [[WaBOP 12,108](#)].

Another six acres of the homestall went to Joseph Tainter [[WaBOP 46,132](#)].

BIRTH: Baptized Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, 23 April 1598, son of Edmund and Mary (Cramphorne) Brown [[Kempton Anc 174](#)].

DEATH: Buried at Watertown 20 June 1636 "aged 36 years" [[WaVR 4](#)].

MARRIAGE: By 1634 Dorothy _____ (she was named in the birth record of both daughters, and in the death record of her husband); probably married (2) **William Potter** of Watertown, who moved in 1645 to Stamford.

CHILDREN:

i HANNAH, b. Watertown 9 September 1634 [[WaVR 3](#)]; possibly m. about 1656 John Mead of Stamford.

ii MARY, b. Watertown 24 March 1636[7] [[WaVR 4](#)]; no further record.

ASSOCIATIONS: John Brown was brother of ~ ABRAHAM BROWN of Watertown, of Edmund Brown of Boston by 1634, and almost certainly of Hannah, the wife of MATTHEW INES .

COMMENTS: There is no further record of the widow Dorothy or the two daughters in Watertown or anywhere else in Massachusetts Bay. The fact that **William Potter** acquired the proprietary share of John Brown soon after the latter's death is highly suggestive. On more than one occasion a single man acquired these land rights by marrying a widow, and this may be what is happening in this case. **William Potter** sold his Watertown land in 1645 and moved to Stamford [[SLR 1:66](#); [GMN 1:8](#)]. When he wrote his will in 1685 the only relative named was son-in-law John Mead (and his eleven children); there is no record for the marriage of this John Mead, but he and wife Hannah started having children about 1656, in which year Hannah Brown, daughter of John and Dorothy, would have been twenty-two. Unfortunately this suggested Brown-Potter connection remains only an hypothesis. If, for example, a record of **William Potter** in Stamford named his wife as Dorothy, the case would be much stronger.

John Brown of Watertown is identified as the passenger on the Lyon because he was the only known John Brown in Massachusetts Bay at this time, and because some other passengers on that ship also settled at Watertown. There are some discrepancies in the vital dates for this family between the town and colony copies of the records [see [NEHGR 6:380, 7:159](#)]; the town copy is preferred here.

Some secondary sources have assigned to John Brown of Watertown a son John, born about 1631, who married in 1655 Esther Makepeace [[Bassett-Preston 49-50](#); [Brown-Parker 1](#)]. Bond had disproved this by citing a deed in which the husband of Esther Makepeace was called "a Scotchman," and by pointing out that the land records quite clearly show that John Brown had only the two daughters [[Bond 731](#)]; the grant of two acres directly to these two daughters especially disproves the possibility of a son John [[WaBOP 77](#)].

Great Migration Study Project, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1999-<2005>